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Headline: Bremerton Takes "Wellness Wednesday" On the Road
Headline: Camp Lejeune Checks Out Students with Check Up
Headline: Hawaii-Based Sailors & Marines Try Out Databank Cards
Headline: Naval Medical/Dental Affairs Wins Award
Headline: Uniform Regs Now Available Electronically
Headline: TRICARE Question and Answer
Headline: Healthwatch: Keep Watch on Moles Around Eyes

Headline: Bremerton Takes "Wellness Wednesday" On the Road
Bremerton, WA--The second Wednesday of each month at Naval Hospital (NH) Bremerton, WA, may be the healthiest days of the year for visitors to the hospital.

That's the day Registered Nurse Judith Warner, a health educator with Bremerton's health promotion department, sets up a mini-health fair in the pharmacy waiting area. She also takes the fair to other commands.

"The idea is to educate in a visual, healthy, appetizing, proactive, interactive way," said Warner.

Health educators, dietitians, fitness managers, and pharmacy technicians gather to check visitors' blood pressure, teach about cholesterol, offer a fresh fruit snack, provide literature on health issues, and hand out "Know Your Numbers" cards to record cholesterol, blood pressure, pulse and other health indicators. A pharmacy technician is also on hand to answer questions about medications.

The presentations change each month, Warner said. "We try to go along with monthly health themes, such as Cholesterol Awareness Month or Sports Injury Prevention Month."

Bremerton's health promotions department was created a little over a year ago. The department now has five staff members who often find themselves on the road as local commands ask to have Wellness Wednesdays at their own command.

"We're taking our road show to the Marine Security Detachment on Sub Base Bangor (WA) next," Warner said. "We gear our programs to what is needed. For the Marines we've been asked to present nutrition and stress management information. They

don't need the segment on fitness. But we'll bring what is needed, including tobacco cessation or women's health issues."

Warner said the subjects commands ask for the most are fitness, nutrition and stress management.

Warner said these Wellness Wednesdays do more than educate people. "We're not always telling people what they don't know, we reminding them to take responsibility for their own health."

By Judith A. Williams, NH Bremerton

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Headline: Camp Lejeune Checks Out Students with Check Up

Camp Lejeune, NC--Before participating in school sports, a check up is a must, according to school officials at Lejeune (NC) High School.

Which is what brought more than 220 students, all children of active duty military personnel, to the gym at the high school one day recently for a check up to make sure their health checked out okay.

Specialists in physical therapy, pediatrics, orthopedics, and sports medicine from Naval Hospital (NH) Camp Lejeune teamed up with Lejeune High School athletic trainers to provide medical clearances for students who wish to participate in school sports in the coming school year. But participating in sports isn't the only reason to get a check up.

"Everyone needs a proper physical exam," said HM3 Jack Bunch of NH Lejeune's physical therapy clinic, "especially kids getting to be in their teenage years. They're at the age where they need to be watching for problems that could be more serious later in life."

According to LT Michele Weinstein, MSC, assistant head of physical therapy, the students' height and weight, blood pressure, joint range of motion, back curvature, heart, and lungs were all checked. Screening adolescents identifies undiagnosed problems before they become more severe, and allows treatment to begin early.

"It takes a minimum of six weeks for therapy to properly treat most injuries," Weinstein said. "Having the screening early gives the kids time to get healthy before going back to participating in sports."

"Pediatricians also conducted overall checkups to identify any other problems," she added. "Counseling was available if any problems were found. For example, if we found a 12-year old who was five feet tall and 80 pounds who wanted to play football, we would try to guide him into a more appropriate sport."

By Ann Kirby, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

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Headline: Hawaii-Based Sailors & Marines Try Out Databank Cards

Hawaii--Imagine a miniature computer in your wallet -- a credit card-sized databank containing information including such things as your medical and pay records.

This "computer" isn't a vision of the future; it's a reality of today. The Multi-technology Automated Reader Card (MARC) is being tested today by Hawaii-based Sailors and other military

members.

MARC has a programmable microchip -- a miniature computer -- embedded in its plastic. It also has a bar code, magnetic strip, printed information, and a digitized photograph. It is capable of holding such information as personnel, medical, dental, physical readiness, financial and legal records; personal identification number (PIN); Social Security number; personnel status (military, DOD civilian or government contractor); military status (active duty or Reserve); and security clearance.

DOD is more than halfway into a two year field test with military members in Hawaii. It will also be issued to DOD civilians.

LCDR Tony Smith, Pacific Fleet MARC program manager, said the military plans to issue MARC by 2001 to all active duty service members, DOD civilians, retirees, Reservists, family members, the department of Veteran Affairs and the Coast Guard.

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Headline: Naval Medical/Dental Affairs Wins Award

Innovation and hard work on the part of the Naval Office of Medical/Dental Affairs (NOMDA) was recently recognized by the American Society of Military Comptrollers with a Team Achievement Award.

NOMDA, located at Great Lakes, IL, received an honorable mention for their development of an innovative claims payment system. The payment system used systems already in place rather than requiring new hardware and software, which allowed NOMDA to save more than \$2.5 million annually, said Office Administrative Officer LT Jim Clearwood, MSC. NOMDA was one of only four Department of the Navy activities to receive recognition.

The new claims payment system allows information to be transmitted electronically rather than by postal mail. In addition to saving money, the system sped up claims processing. By Ann Kirby, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

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Headline: Uniform Regs Now Available Electronically

Uniform regulations are available on CD ROM at the Norfolk Navy Exchange Uniform Shop. A computer and printer allow customers to get information from the disk and make a copy to take home.

"Before, our uniform regulations were in a 1.5-inch (thick) book," said CDR Richard Nelson, Naval Base (VA) Norfolk Navy exchange officer. "Customers would have to look through the book to find what they were looking for and would often times want a copy of the page. A store associate would have to run to the office to make a copy. It wasn't a very customer friendly way to do it."

When Nelson found the regulations were available on CD ROM, he jumped at the chance to get one for his store. "It was such an easy way for us to provide better customer service," said Nelson.

"Everyone has been quite impressed that we have the regulations on computer," said Sylvia Huey, uniform shop manager.

"It's a nice feature for our customers."

While Norfolk is the Exchange with the electronic regulations, the Navy Exchange Command would like to see other Uniform shops use it as well.

"Eventually, we'd like to do have this in place world-wide," aid Shannon McElligott of the Navy Exchange Service Command in Norfolk, VA.

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Headline: TRICARE Questions and Answers

Question: I heard a rumor that TRICARE would be coming overseas. Is that true?

Answer: TRICARE is already well under way in Europe and in early implementation stages in the Pacific. The plan is to offer both TRICARE Prime and TRICARE Standard options when the program is fully in place. Only active duty family members can enroll in TRICARE Prime. Those who choose to enroll in TRICARE Prime will have the same benefit offered by TRICARE Prime in the United States with the added benefit provided by waiver of the CHAMPUS deductible and cost shares for active duty family members who must obtain care from host nation sources.

Question: What happens to families stationed overseas who currently are not enrolled in TRICARE when they visit the U.S., and need medical care, and there is no military facility in the area they are visiting?

Answer: If you are in a TAD or leave status and your family accompanies you in CONUS they may use TRICARE Standard (CHAMPUS). If you would like to know more about these issues, contact the local TRICARE Service Center for more information.

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Headline: Healthwatch: Keep Watch on Moles Around Eyes

That little mole on your eyelid doesn't mean anything. Or does it? An optometric expert in ultraviolet radiation speaking at the annual meeting of the American Optometric Association (AOA) in Portland, OR, says that it may look like a mole, but it could be skin cancer.

The dangers of sun exposure to both the eyes and the skin are well-documented, but not a lot has been said about skin cancers around the eye. Dr. Leo Semes, associate professor at the University of Alabama--Birmingham School of Optometry, noted at the AOA meeting that the effects of sun damage around the eye can vary.

"Some complications are non-malignant and cause the skin to lose elasticity. The other end of the spectrum encompasses a couple types of cancer," he said.

Most sun-related skin lesions don't interfere with the function of the eye unless the lid is affected and doesn't close properly, according to Semes. But people still need to keep an eye on their moles. Most malignant melanomas look like they have "charred" edges and will change in color or size.

"Among all cancers in the last ten years, this is the only one that's shown an increase in incidence," Semes said.

Ninety percent of cancers of the eyelids are basal cell

carcinomas and of these most are found on the lower lid. Experts theorize that's because that lid is most exposed to overhead ultraviolet radiation. This type of cancer is locally invasive. It eats its way deeply under the skin, but it does not spread to other parts of the body and may not be painful, according to Semes. Signs that require a visit to an eye care specialist are changes in the mole's color and elevation, or bleeding of the mole.

The eye care specialist will generally refer a patient with skin cancer of the eye to an oculoplastic specialist, practitioners of a narrow subspecialty of ophthalmology who completed a residency and fellowship training in lesions of the eye. "Not many ophthalmologist and few dermatologists will touch these cases, so the referral will come from the optometrist, the primary eye care practitioner," Dr. Semes said.

"People can avoid having to visit such a specialist by taking a few simple precautions. Sunglasses and broad-brimmed hats go a long way towards preventing skin cancers," Semes said. "Melanoma seems to run in families, so there can be a genetic predisposition there. Light-eyed, light-haired people are also more susceptible. Youngsters especially need to be protected, because sun damage is cumulative. We don't see many eye lesions on young people."

Courtesy of American Optometric Association

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Feedback and comments are welcome. Story submissions are encouraged. Contact Jan Davis at e-mail address nmc0jkd@bms200.med.navy.mil, telephone 202/762-3223 (DSN 762-3223), or fax 202/762-3224.